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**AESTHETIC AUTONOMY  
AND THE CRISIS OF THEORY:  
GREENBERG, ADORNO, AND  
THE PROBLEM OF POSTMODERNISM  
IN THE VISUAL ARTS**

*As is clearly inscribed in the very term 'postmodern', any position defining itself as such is, by definition, a position on the modern - a postmodern vision cannot be a solely prospective one, it is necessarily also a retrospective one.*

(Victor Burgin, 'The end of art theory')

I THE PROBLEM OF A CONTEMPORARY AESTHETIC

If aesthetic theory has substance only to the extent to which it reflects the historical development of its subject,<sup>1</sup> it is, I think, fair to say that there is at present no satisfactory contemporary aesthetic of the visual arts. Both the sheer formal diversity of the art of the last twenty years and certain of the unifying tendencies which it has none the less come to display, have so undermined the basic presuppositions and parameters of judgement of the aesthetics of modernism as to throw into doubt, not merely the continuing validity of this aesthetic as an historically specific manifestation of the aesthetic theory of modernity, but the very idea of 'aesthetics' itself as an independent or autonomous theoretical sphere. Aesthetic theory, it is increasingly suggested, at least in the form in which it existed from the Enlightenment up until its culmination in the high modernist formalism of the 1950s and early 1960s, is at an end.<sup>2</sup> Current aesthetic theory registers its contemporaneity through its crisis.

The form in which this crisis manifests itself is, however, paradoxically that of a massive *inflation* of theoretical writing about art. The less sure of itself aesthetics has become, the more it has come to manifest this insecurity in the form of a search for objectivity, the possibility of which would seem to be denied by the very instability of its object (contemporary art). The range and vitality of current aesthetic debate has come to mimic the apparently infinite formal possibilities of the 'post-avant-gardist' art which it seeks to comprehend. Aesthetic theory, it would seem, is in danger of becoming 'aestheticized' at precisely the moment at which it is no longer able, theoretically, to sustain any such notion.<sup>3</sup>

The source of this crisis is, of course, the crisis of modernism itself: the apparent exhaustion of that last bastion of aesthetic traditionalism, the 'tradition of overthrowing tradition' (Rosenberg):<sup>4</sup> the self-annihilation of the

'culture of negation' (Poggioli).<sup>5</sup> Its putative resolution, the idea of 'post-modernism' - that 'first glimpse of the historical emergence of a field of *post-Romantic aesthetics*'<sup>6</sup> - involves, in this respect, a reorientation towards, if not a recuperation of, tradition.<sup>7</sup> Yet, as the studied ambivalence of Rosenberg's description of modernism suggests, the relation of this reorientation to modernism itself remains unclear. For modernism is, in its own peculiar, relentlessly restless way, *itself a tradition*. It is for this reason that Jencks, for example, insists on the definition of postmodernism as at once 'the continuation of Modernism *and* its transcendence'.<sup>8</sup>

In what sense, though, is modernism a tradition? What is the relation of the so-called 'postmodernist' reorientation of art towards tradition to the relationship between modernism and tradition? And what are its implications for the idea of a specifically 'aesthetic' theory? It is at this point that matters begin to become rather more complicated. For it is clear from even a cursory glance at Jencks's writings on postmodernism, for example, that those elements of the 'modern' (the slippage has already begun) which, he argues, continue to characterize the 'postmodern' are defined primarily at the level of *technique*, of *style*, and, more generally, of '*sensibility*'. When the question of the transcendence of modernism by postmodernism is at stake, however, an entirely different and much wider conception of modernism is deployed within his work: a conception of modernism as a whole cultural project, with its own distinctive orientation towards society and towards history: a distinctive conception not only of aesthetic form, but of the place and function of art within society as well.<sup>10</sup> At times (most notably in his attempts to distinguish postmodernism from late modernism on the one hand, and from a more straightforward revival of tradition on the other) Jencks not only acknowledges but insists upon the fact that modernism cannot be defined merely stylistically.<sup>11</sup> Elsewhere, however, he is far less clear about the matter. For it remains obscure in what sense the 'modern' is to manifest itself within the 'postmodern' other than stylistically - albeit as a part of a wider repertoire of styles, coexisting side by side in the new, hybridized language of postmodernist eclecticism.<sup>12</sup> Yet if this is all there is to the continuity between modernism and postmodernism, then the former is reduced, in its relationship to the latter, to the status of a tradition *like any other*. The complexity, the creativity, and the deeply contradictory character of the relationship between modernism and tradition is not so much suppressed by this move as completely effaced. The problem of the dialectical continuity of modernism which Jencks, like so many others, had set out to resolve, is simply abandoned; left behind in the rush for a convincing taxonomy of styles.

There is a fatal disjunction between the terms of the 'double-coding' (continuation and transcendence) which stands at the core of Jencks's conception of postmodernism. The confusions of his conception are, however, instructive. For they are symptomatic of a wider problem, the ramifications of which extend into the farthest corners of current aesthetic debates. This is the problem of the relationship between two quite distinct, if none the less interconnected conceptions of modernism: a stylistic, formalistic, or what might be called an 'art-historical' conception of modernism, derived in the

most part, within the visual arts, from the work of Clement Greenberg; and a far wider (socio-cultural) and deeper (aesthetico-philosophical) conception of modernism, such as is to be found, for example, in the work of the Frankfurt school and other theorists from within the German tradition. It is, I shall argue, in the constant and systematic privileging of the first of these two conceptions over the second in the attempt to theorize a concept of postmodernism for the visual arts that much of both the mystery and the intractability of the problem of postmodernism (and thereby of the problem of the possibility and form of a contemporary aesthetic theory) lie. The problem derives from the hegemonic status of Greenberg's conception of modernism within the art world of the 1960s.

## 2 THE REACTION TO GREENBERG

For those working within, yet at the margins of, the art establishment in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was Greenberg and all that he stood for that was the enemy. It is in terms of a repudiation of his work, and of the kind of art for which it stands, that much of both the art and the art theory produced since the mid-1960s is to be understood.<sup>13</sup> It is primarily in opposition to Greenberg's conception of modernism that the idea of postmodernism has evolved in the visual arts. When Victor Burgin writes of the conceptualism of the late 1960s as 'a revolt against modernism - specifically, we should add, as formulated in the writings of the American critic Clement Greenberg'<sup>14</sup> - he speaks for a generation of artists and critics. And he continues to speak for this generation (particularly for other artist-critics) when, in opposition to the self-referential autonomy of Greenberg's aesthetics, he offers instead a 'politics of representation' within which the 'aesthetic', the art object as traditionally construed, is to be considered simply as one medium among others (and an increasingly sterile one at that) for the deployment of a variety of representational strategies, the logic of which is to derive less from the specificity of the chosen medium than from a general semiotic theory of representation within the terms of which, it is argued, *all* meaning is to be construed.<sup>15</sup> Art practice, it is increasingly suggested, is to be seen as 'a set of operations performed in a *field of signifying practices*, perhaps centred on a medium but certainly not bounded by it'.<sup>16</sup> It is this whole 'set of ooperations', it is argued, which must become the object of analysis and judgement, rather than their mere result, the art 'object' as it has been traditionally understood. The very idea of the art 'object', it is insisted, requires reconceptualization if current artistic practices are to be understood - a reconceptualization which would place it beyond the bounds of 'aesthetic' theory as such.

What is at issue in these debates is Greenberg's insistence on the traditional specificity of the aesthetic object, his imperative to the artist to develop the work out of the immanent formal properties of the medium, and the consequent self-enclosed, self-referential autonomy of the 'high' modernist work itself.<sup>17</sup> It is this inherent tendency towards self-referentiality within the late modernist work which was the main object of attack for all those artists and critics who attempted to move beyond Greenbergian modernism from the

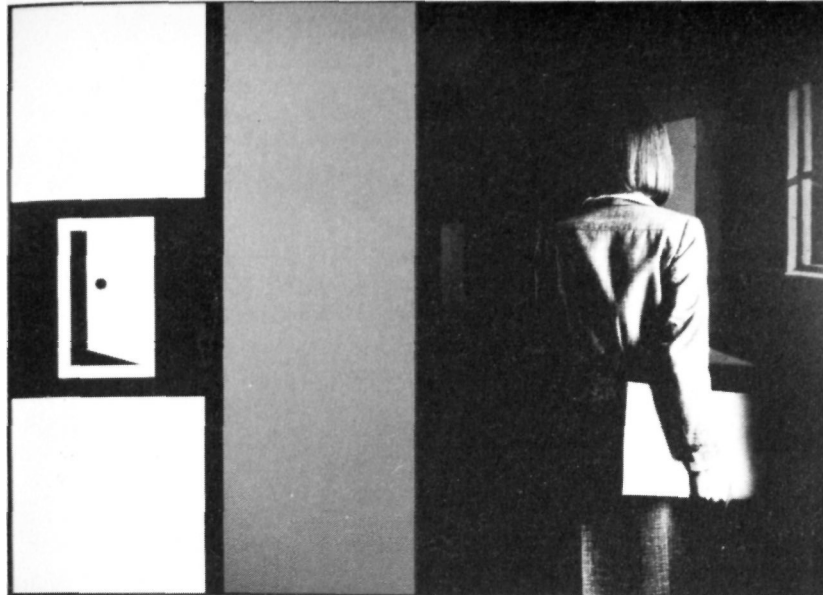
mid-1960s onwards, for two main reasons. One was immanently aesthetic, the other more explicitly social or ideological. On the one hand, there was a growing awareness of the inherently degenerative character of the high modernist tradition: the *kenosis* or 'self-emptying' character of a tradition within which new content has to be constantly generated from the formal properties of the aesthetic medium alone.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, there was a growing *political* reaction to the increasing social conservatism of a formalistic art the original critical dimension of which had long ago been negated by its canonization within the major art institutions of western states.<sup>19</sup>

The aesthetic form of the reaction to this situation was immensely varied - ranging from conceptualism's direct attack on the idea of the art object (Burgin's 'absence of presence'), through an increasing use of new and particularly 'mixed' media (including, especially, photography and other 'mass' media), the direct reinstatement of social and political representational content into the work, and the reintroduction of traditional, art historical iconographic material (usually in a deliberately hybrid, ironic, or parodic fashion), to straightforward repetitions of the 'historical' avant-garde's internal attack upon the art institution itself, through the simple designation of everyday, mass-produced commodities as aesthetic objects in their own right. It is this plurality of new artistic forms and strategies which has caused such a problem for aesthetic theory since the 1960s. And it is primarily because of its pretension to cope with this plurality, indeed, to *theorize* it, that the idea of postmodernism has enjoyed such enormous popularity over the last few years. Indeed, postmodernism may be seen, in this respect, as Peter Burger has suggested, as the basis for an aspiring new academicism.<sup>20</sup>

A number of things should be noted about the explosion of a multiplicity of new artistic forms in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the first place, there



Victor Burgin: from *Olympia* (1982).



Victor Burgin: from *Office at Night* (7 panels, 1985)

was a particularly dynamic interaction during this period between artistic practices and the new theoretical discourses which were being developed to understand them, such that these discourses were themselves increasingly used, not merely as an essential part of the *means* of artistic production (something which has always been the case), but as an essential part of the art practice or 'object' itself as well.<sup>21</sup> Secondly, there was a growth of organic links between certain of these new artistic and theoretical developments and those social movements (particularly the women's movement) which were emerging or re-emerging at the time.<sup>22</sup> Finally, there were a number of important developments taking place within the social relations of the art institution itself, in terms of its twin relations to the market and to the state. A massive growth in multinational corporate investment in the arts, the emergence of new 'mass' styles of exhibiting and marketing by the national institutions of western states (led, symptomatically, by the Museum of Modern Art in New York), and the expansion and transformation of art school education, should all be mentioned in this regard.<sup>23</sup> These latter developments, moreover, all took place in close, if often contradictory relationships with the development of the new art practices themselves.

All of this has produced enormous, if not insurmountable, complications for attempts to reimpose a unity, at the level of a specifically 'aesthetic' theory, upon the field of contemporary artistic production. In response to these difficulties, critics have tended either to give up the attempt as in principle misguided (the 'end of art theory' theory), or to reimpose normative standards of aesthetic judgement which exclude vast tracts of contemporary artistic production from the sphere of 'aesthetics', and hence of genuine artistic value altogether (the return to tradition). The idea of postmodernism [straddles](#) the

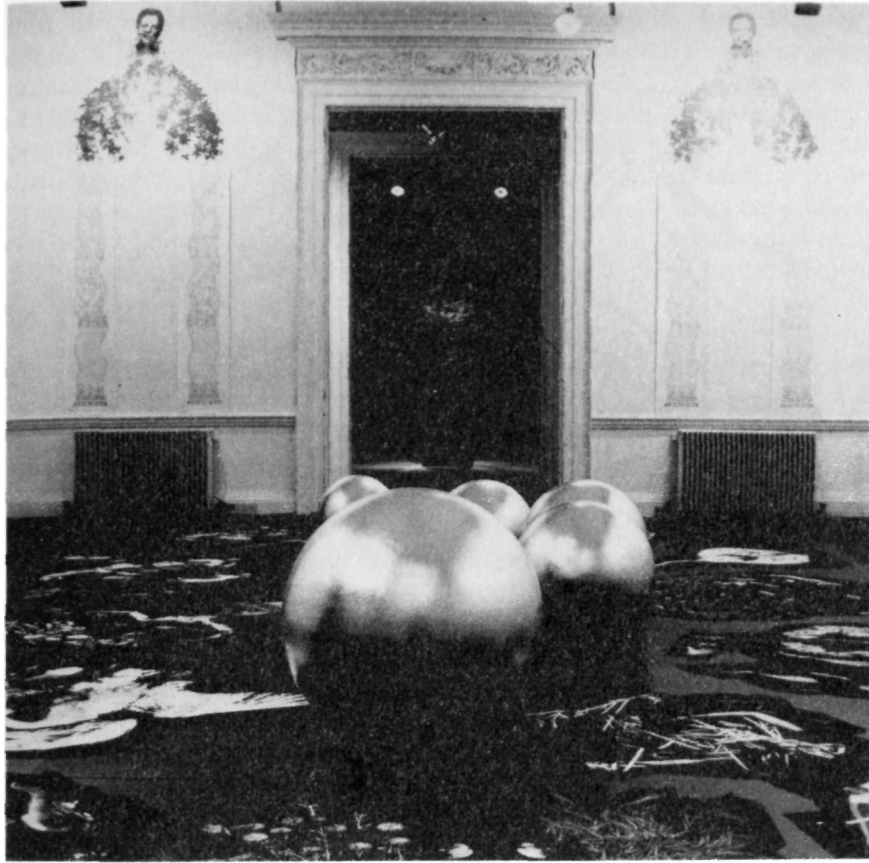


Alexis Hunter, *Considering Theory*, 1982

gap between these two equally unsatisfactory alternatives. Yet, as it stands, this idea remains as theoretically eclectic as the art which it pertains to comprehend is aesthetically hybrid; more of a symptom of the limits of a certain discourse on modernism than a resolution to the problem of its continuing applicability.<sup>24</sup>

One of the main problems here, I want to suggest, lies in the running together of two quite distinct conceptions of aesthetic *autonomy* in Greenberg's work, along with the total neglect of a third; and a consequent failure on the part of proponents of postmodernism to distinguish between the various different ways in which work produced in reaction to Greenbergian modernism challenges the 'autonomy' of the 'high' or late modernist work. Furthermore, I want to suggest, just as it is only in Adorno's work that one can find something approaching an adequate conceptualization of the multiple senses of the autonomy of the modernist work, so it is only through a systematic application of the categories of his aesthetic theory to the understanding of recent artistic developments that we can begin to make real headway with the whole set of issues which are currently discussed under the convenient yet mystifying rubric of 'postmodernism'. For it is in Adorno's work alone that the 'dual essence' of art as something which is *at once* socially determined *and* 'autonomous' finds anything approaching an adequate theoretical expression.<sup>25</sup>

The formal similarities and historical parallels between Greenberg's and Adorno's aesthetics have often been noted.<sup>26</sup> Nowhere, however, as far as I am aware, have they been explored in any detail. There has, though, been a



Helen Chadwick: *Of Mutability*. Installation, view of the 'Oval Court' and 'Carcass', ICA London.

growing tendency to reject Adorno's work as historically outmoded in much the same way as Greenberg's work has been attacked since the mid-1960s. Implicit in these attacks is the notion that the two theories are involved in essentially the same kind of defence of an outmoded modernism. It is this idea that I am concerned to oppose. Adorno's aesthetics, I shall suggest, stands to Greenberg's as 'traditional' stands to 'critical' theory.<sup>28</sup> Its whole rationale is to overcome precisely that 'one-sidedness that necessarily arises when limited intellectual processes are detached from their matrix in the total activity of society', which, according to Horkheimer, is a defining characteristic of all 'traditional' theory,<sup>29</sup> and which is so evident a feature of the traditionalism of Greenberg's conception of aesthetic experience. This relation is to be seen at its clearest in a comparison of Greenberg's and Adorno's conceptions, first, of the idea of the autonomy of the art work; second, of that of its aesthetic medium or, in Adorno's case, its 'artistic material'; and finally in their respective conceptions of the relationship of modernism to tradition, and to the idea of the avant-garde.

The novelty and formal diversity of current art practices, it will be argued,





Nancy Spero: *The First Language*

only pose a problem for the idea of a specifically 'aesthetic' theory of the visual arts to the extent to which such a theory fails to take account, at the level of its basic categorical structure, of the dual and contradictory essence of modern art as at once a historically specific form of critical social practice *and* a realm of 'autonomous' aesthetic objects. To take account of this dual essence, however, does not so much require the *abandonment* of the traditional philosophical conception of the 'aesthetic' as a distinct form of experience, as its *transformative reintegration* into the kind of broad socio-historical theory of experience represented by the original Frankfurt School project for a materialist reunification of philosophy with the empirical sciences. It is the beginnings of just such a transformative reintegration of the concept of the 'aesthetic' into a totalizing (but never totalized) theory of cognitive experience - a theory which is at once 'philosophical' and concretely socio-historical in intent - which is to be found in Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*.

### 3 GREENBERG AND ADORNO ( I ) : THE AUTONOMY OF THE ART WORK

The first thing to note about Greenberg's and Adorno's conceptions of aesthetic autonomy is that both are essentially historical. The autonomy of the art work is understood in both cases as the product of the development of society at large. The form of the historical explanation offered in each case, however, differs significantly; and it is from this difference that the essential difference between their respective conceptions of the autonomy of the art work derives. For Greenberg, it is the waning of religion, of 'authority', and of tradition, in the sense of a breaking-up of those 'accepted *notions* upon which artists must depend in large part for communication with their audiences', which is the main issue.<sup>30</sup> For Adorno, on the other hand, it is the specific

form of the *commodification* of art which occurs as a result of the decay of the feudal social relations within which the system of artistic production was originally embedded, which is of primary significance.<sup>31</sup> The two points are obviously related, since each describes a different facet of a single historical process. But the difference between them is crucial. For whereas Greenberg conceives of the autonomy of the art work, from the outset, solely at the level of its meaning, Adorno conceives it, at least in its most fundamental sense, at the level of those social relations constitutive of 'art' as a *social* phenomenon. Within this analysis, it is the institutionalization of autonomy which makes possible and sustains the autonomy of the work at the level of meaning. As a result, the sense in which the art work is understood to be 'autonomous' at the level of meaning is quite different for Adorno from the way in which it is understood by Greenberg.

The philosophical differentiation of the 'aesthetic' as a distinct sphere of value in the work first of Baumgarten and then of Kant was underpinned by the development of new forms of social relation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - specifically, those associated with the rise of bourgeois individualism.<sup>32</sup> In the wake of the generalization of the social relations of commodity production during the course of the nineteenth century, this theoretical specification of the 'aesthetic' became the intellectual basis for the institutionalization of art as a specific, and very special kind of, commodity: namely, a commodity the exchange-value of which derives, paradoxically, not from its usefulness as such (its direct social utility), but rather from the specific form of its *uselessness*: its capacity to sustain 'disinterested' or 'aesthetic' contemplation. (It is for this reason that the art market is a purely speculative one.) Aesthetic theory thereby acquired the function, not only of delimiting and theorizing a distinct form of experience (the 'aesthetic'), but also of regulating and legitimating the distribution of its privileged objects (works of art) through the market, via the dissemination of judgements of 'taste'.<sup>33</sup> It is in the crisis of *this* function - a crisis precipitated by the growing obsolescence of the categories of traditional aesthetics to the comprehension of contemporary art - that the social meaning of the current crisis of aesthetic theory is to be found. At the heart of this crisis is a fundamental questioning of the idea of autonomy which has traditionally provided the philosophical groundwork for the category of taste. It is the great value of Adorno's work that it allows us to comprehend this crisis not merely as a contingent historical phenomenon, but as a necessary stage in what, in typically Hegelian fashion, he describes as the 'logical development' of art itself.<sup>34</sup>

The key lies in Adorno's conception of art as at once a 'social' and an (autonomous) 'aesthetic' phenomenon. It is the contradiction between these two aspects of art which constitutes, for him, both the 'dual essence' of all modern art and the dynamic underlying its development.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, it is the way in which this contradiction is handled, immanently, within the form of any particular work which determines both its status as an 'autonomous' aesthetic object, and, thereby, its critical capacity. The form of this contradiction is as follows. On the one hand, all art is a social product; its 'autonomy' is always something which is produced and sustained by a specific

set of social relations, rather than something which adheres *sui generis* in the aesthetic object itself. On the other hand, the art object none the less *posits* itself as autonomous, *absolutely*, in so far as it presents itself within the art institution as the bearer of a distinctive, 'autonomous' form of experience: the 'aesthetic'. It is for this reason that, according to Adorno, the social processes through which art is produced appear within the work itself *through*, rather than as a supplement to, its aesthetic form. 'The unresolved antagonisms of reality reappear in art in the guise of immanent problems of aesthetic form.'<sup>36</sup> It is the way in which these problems are handled, immanently, by the artist, which determines whether or not any particular work is to be judged to be 'authentically' or 'genuinely' autonomous.

The particular 'antagonisms of reality' which Adorno has in mind in the above quotation are primarily those to do with the social consequences of commodity production. For him, it is in the form of a contradiction between its status as a commodity and its status as an autonomous aesthetic object that the contradictory essence of art in capitalist societies manifests itself and works itself out. The form taken by this contradiction may be understood as that of a contradiction between two different aspects of the commodity form itself: the commodity as fetish, and the commodity as a bearer of exchange-value. It is the way in which the second of these two aspects (the commodity as a bearer of exchange-value) creates the conditions for the subversion of the first (the fetishization of the object as a bearer of 'autonomous' value), by reducing the value of the aesthetic object to the values of the market - via the pressure which is exerted upon the production of art objects by the commercial and ideological factors at work in the various networks of their distribution and consumption - which, according to Adorno, explains both the restless dynamic of the dialectic of aesthetic modernism and the increasingly constitutive *unintelligibility* of 'authentic' late modernist works. For, he argues, the history of modernism is, at base, the history of those aesthetic strategies through which the work of art (the commodity as fetish) has resisted its own social form (the commodity as exchange) in order to be able to continue to reveal, through its difference from it, the true meaning of the social order of which it is a part, as a form of un-freedom.<sup>37</sup>

Once it becomes clear that the aesthetic autonomy of the art work is both embedded within and ultimately dependent upon its institutional autonomy, but that the specific form of this institutionalization of autonomy (commodification) is none the less a growing threat to it, it also becomes clear that the autonomous status of any particular work must always be judged in terms of its immanent capacity to resist the values of the market through which it must, of necessity, nevertheless acquire its social reality. In this regard, Adorno argues, any particular work may only be judged to be 'genuinely' or 'authentically' autonomous to the extent to which the *logic of its production* remains independent of the extra-aesthetic values which will, inevitably, effect its reception. This is not, of course, to suggest that its result may not be compatible, to some extent, with certain of these values, since this *must* be the case if it is to achieve an independent existence as an art work within the art institution. Rather, it is to argue that the art work must none the less actively

resist these values from within, if it is to achieve the status of a genuinely 'autonomous' work. It is the dilemma embodied in this tension that confronts all contemporary artists as the problem of aesthetic form. It is in the individual artist's struggle with this problem that, in Adorno's phrase, 'social antinomies turn into the dialectic of forms'.<sup>38</sup> And it is through his or her articulation of these antinomies in the language of art (their 'formed presentation') that, he argues, the individual artist performs his or her distinctive social role.<sup>39</sup>

There are, then, three quite distinct senses implicit within Adorno's work in which modern art may be said to be 'autonomous'. It is autonomous: (1) theoretically (as the privileged site of a distinct, theoretically specifiable, form of experience); (2) socially or institutionally (in so far as the norms and practices of the institutions of the art world provide the institutional conditions for the realization of this theoretical autonomy in a distinct form of social experience: aesthetic experience), and (3) immanently (in so far as the logic of production of the individual work actually conforms to that of the production of an object capable of producing, within the viewer, an 'autonomous' aesthetic experience).

Within Greenberg's work, the second of these three senses of autonomy is noticeably absent; while the third is consequently reduced to the first through the idea of specifically aesthetic 'values'; the 'pure' expression of the 'irreducible elements of experience' through the reduction of the meaning of the work to the formal properties of its physical medium.<sup>40</sup> It is through this move that the idea of autonomy becomes inextricably linked within Greenberg's work to that of self-referentiality - an idea which plays no such founding role within Adorno's work. Indeed, Adorno's theory actively rejects such a role for self-referentiality, since it is the primary function of the idea to deny any constitutive role to the 'social' within the 'aesthetic'.

Greenberg is certainly aware of what he calls the 'umbilical cord of gold' which ties the modern artist, however avant-garde, to existing society.<sup>41</sup> He continues, however, to conceive of this bond in terms of the idea of 'patronage'. He is thereby able to grasp it solely in its aspect as a form of dependency, neglecting the fact that it is through the specific form of this dependency (its relation to the market) that modern art became, and continues to be, institutionally, and thereby (potentially) immanently, 'autonomous'. It is the difference between Adorno's and Greenberg's work on this point which structures the difference between their respective conceptions of the autonomy immanent in the modernist work itself.

Whereas for Greenberg the question of autonomy is essentially a question of the degree to which a work has 'purified' itself of any aesthetic content extraneous to the formal properties of its particular physical medium (in defensive reaction to the erosion of those 'absolute' social values in relation to which it had previously defined itself), for Adorno such 'purification' is in principle impossible, and in any case, undesirable, since the truth content of art - derived from the dialectic of mimesis and rationality constitutive of the process of its production - can only, ultimately, be social in form.<sup>42</sup> The issue, for Adorno, is thus not whether or not (or the extent to which) a work has freed itself, absolutely, from the social conditions of its production; but rather,

whether or not (or the extent to which) it has succeeded in giving these contradictory social conditions an 'authentic' or 'autonomous' aesthetic expression.

The contrast may be illustrated with reference to the aesthetic meaning of abstraction, a category which is central to both theories, but which performs a quite different role within each of them. For Greenberg, abstraction is an essential formal component of autonomy: the means whereby the medium is purified of any extraneous aesthetic content.<sup>43</sup> For Adorno, on the other hand, it is: (1) a reflection of the growing abstraction characteristic of all social relations within capitalist societies (the 'real' abstraction of abstract labour-time as the unit of social accounting in commodity production, and the consequent reification of social relations which follows from it);<sup>44</sup> and (2) a historically specific aesthetic strategy for the critical expression of such reification. (It is for this reason that Adorno describes Beckett as a 'realist'.) There is for Adorno no direct, a priori, relationship between abstraction and autonomy in art; nor is abstraction to be understood in opposition to the idea of social content. Rather, it embodies a distinctive social content of its own. The difference between Greenberg's and Adorno's views on this point becomes particularly clear when we examine the contrast between their conceptions of the 'aesthetic medium' and 'artistic material', respectively. It is this difference which, in turn, structures the difference between their respective conceptions of the relationship of modernism to tradition.

#### 4 GREENBERG AND ADORNO (II): ARTISTIC MATERIAL, MODERNISM, AND TRADITION

'The history of avant-garde painting', Greenberg writes in 'Towards a newer Laocoon' (1940),

is that of a progressive surrender to the resistance of its medium. . . . The purely plastic or abstract qualities of the work are the only ones that count . . . the pristine flatness of the stretched canvas constantly struggles to overcome every other element. . . . Purity in art consists in the acceptance, willing acceptance, of the limitations of the medium of the specific art.<sup>45</sup>

It is in the traditionalism of this idea of the purity of the medium of the 'specific art', set forth in this essay in explicit opposition to that of the 'confusion' of the arts represented by surrealism, that the fundamental traditionalism of Greenberg's whole aesthetics lies. From this idea alone, he derives his entire account both of the aesthetic meaning of modernist painting and of its essential continuity with tradition.

The continuity of modernism with tradition lies, according to Greenberg, in the continuity of the physical properties of traditional aesthetic media. In the absence of aesthetic constraints derived from some direct social function, these properties provide art with its 'essential norms or conventions'.<sup>46</sup> Modernism, he insists:

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has never meant anything like a break with the past. It may mean a devolution, an unravelling of anterior tradition, but it also means its continuation. Modern art develops out of the past *without gap or break*, and wherever it ends up it will never stop being intelligible in terms of the continuity of art. The making of pictures has been governed, since pictures first began to be made, by all the norms I have mentioned . . . . Nothing could be further from the authentic art of our time than the idea of a rupture of continuity. Art is, among many other things, continuity. Without the past of art, and without the need to need to maintain past standards of excellence, such a thing as Modernist art would be impossible.<sup>47</sup>

It is not hard, in the context of such remarks, to understand the irresistibility of the idea of postmodernism; not least, for those modernists for whom modernism means, and has always meant, a *break* with tradition. To be a modernist in *this* sense, in the context of the overarching hegemony of Greenberg's conception of modernism within the art institution of the early 1960s, meant, of necessity, to be a post(Greenbergian)modernist. The more strictly theoretical value of the designation 'postmodernism', however, is obviously parasitical upon that of the conception of modernism to which it is opposed. And in this case, I would suggest, there are grounds for serious doubt as to its theoretical usefulness.

It is in part because of his own insistence upon the continuity of modernism and tradition that Adorno's work appears, at first sight, to resemble Greenberg's. Yet it is on this very topic that their views stand most starkly opposed. For whereas for Greenberg the continuity of modernist with pre-modernist art resides in the continuity of the 'essential norms or conventions of painting' (or of any other traditional medium for that matter), in terms of which the work is produced, for Adorno the continuity lies rather in the specific form of the *rejection* of just such norms and conventions by modernist works. It is in this sense, above all else, a dialectical continuity. The sense in which, for Adorno, the 'new' is that through which the 'old' continues to be possible,<sup>48</sup> is diametrically opposed to that contained in Greenberg's work. For the 'old' (the classical ideal of the organic unity of the aesthetic object, and, through it, the social ideal of an autonomous yet 'reconciled' existence), he argues, lives on within modernism only negatively; only, that is, through that preservation of it as an ideal which persists within the continual negation of its actuality by the modernist or 'non-organic' work by virtue of the implicit claim to unity which is contained in the very idea of the art work as an autonomous object. It is dissonance, not harmony, which is the principle of modernism. Indeed, the necessity for such a principled disruption of harmony, created by the essentially 'affirmative' role of art within bourgeois society, constitutes, for Adorno, both the essential rationale of the modernist work and the origin of its deeply problematic relationship to the aesthetic tradition. To the extent to which modernism represents a continued and systematic negation of the aesthetic ideals of the classical work, whilst none the less remaining dependent for its critical effectivity upon that preservation of those ideals implicit in the idea of the art work itself, so it must be the task of an aesthetic theory 'to

foster the rational and concrete dissolution of conventional aesthetic categories' by confronting them with the most recent forms of artistic practice. It cannot, however, give them up completely.<sup>49</sup> It is just such a rational dissolution of the traditionalism of Greenberg's idea of 'the medium of the specific art' which is to be found in Adorno's idea of artistic material.

Just as it is through the idea of the continuity of the most basic physical properties of traditional aesthetic media that Greenberg secures his conception of the continuity of modernism and tradition, so it is through his conception of the constant development of what he calls 'artistic material' that Adorno secures his conception of the continual negation performed by modernism upon tradition - including those emergent aesthetic traditions derived from 'old' or 'dead' modernist works themselves: the coagulation of 'modernism' into a series of styles. It is through the mediation of the idea of artistic material, furthermore, that Adorno conceives of the interpenetration of the dialectics of history and of art, and sets out to demonstrate the specific form of the presence of the 'social' *within* the 'aesthetic'.

Adorno's idea of artistic material refers to 'all that is being formed'. It is 'the stuff the artist controls and manipulates: words, colours, sounds - all the way up to connections of any kind and to the highly developed methods of integration he [*sic*] might use': 'all that the artist is confronted by, all that he must make a decision about, and that includes forms as well'. As such, it is 'always historical, never natural, irrespective of what artists themselves might think' and 'just as dependent upon technical changes as technique is upon materials worked upon by it'.<sup>50</sup> It is the way in which any particular set of materials is treated by the artist which determines the critical efficacy of any particular work. This efficacy is, however, constrained by the character of the materials used. For it is the progressive, socially determined redundancy of particular forms of artistic material as possible media for the expression of truth - as a consequence of their neutralization by the history of the reception of previous works - which, Adorno argues, drives on the dialectic of aesthetic modernism.

The strictly 'aesthetic' value of any particular artistic means is, then, judged to be inseparable from its relation to the wider dialectics of social development. It is this idea of modernism as a dynamic of aesthetic development, driven on by the wider dialectic of social development, in relation to which it stands as at once a constitutive part and a separate, 'autonomous', reactive sphere - rather than a process the rationale of which might be specified in terms of stylistic or merely formal aesthetic elements alone - which forms the basis for the continuing application of Adorno's aesthetics to the comprehension of so-called 'postmodernist works'. The forced separation of 'social' from more narrowly 'aesthetic' concerns within Greenberg's work, on the other hand, accounts for the inability of his aesthetics to begin to comprehend the most important artistic developments of the last twenty years. For it is the internalization into the productive logic of the art work itself of the recognition of the essentially social character of aesthetic autonomy (and the consequent expansion of the means of artistic expression which this internalization makes possible) which marks the decisive

break between so much recent art and the earlier 'high' modernist works in relation to which Greenberg developed his aesthetics.

It is this recognition, furthermore, which provides the link between the aesthetic developments of the last twenty years and what Peter Burger has called the 'historical' avant-garde of Dada and surrealism - the rationale of which was less to contribute to the dialectic of aesthetic modernism as such, than to subvert the autonomy of the art work from within.<sup>51</sup> It is, however, in the *difference* of the latest artistic developments from those associated with the 'historical' avant-garde that the aesthetic specificity of these developments, in so far as they have one, must be sought. Since it is the recognition of the inevitability of the failure of the historical avant-garde's internal attack upon the art institution, and the consequent redeployment of its artistic strategies within the sphere of autonomous art as specifically aesthetic strategies (already implicit in the tradition of critical aesthetic modernism defended by Adorno) which provides the point from which the latest artistic developments start out. It is in the combination of these two features - a recognition (1) of the social basis of aesthetic autonomy, and (2) of the consequent futility of attempting to abolish this autonomy from within the aesthetic sphere itself - that the peculiar, ambivalent relationship of the latest, purportedly 'postmodern' aesthetic developments to the idea of the avant-garde lies.

##### 5 MODERNISM, POSTMODERNISM, AND AVANT-GARDE

The question of the relationship between the categories of 'modernism' and the 'avant-garde' is yet another question to which, at first sight, Greenberg and Adorno appear to offer similar answers; yet again, their theories are in fact quite different. Both tend to *identify* the ideas of modernism and the avant-garde; but the determinate content of their respective identifications is quite different. Thus, while Greenberg reduces the concept of avant-garde to that of his own distinctive concept of modernism, thereby removing its political content while at the same time, by association, giving a spurious political veneer to the artistic drive towards formal 'purity',<sup>52</sup> Adorno expands the concept of modernism into that of a perpetual avant-garde, the aesthetic rationality of which is to derive, not from some tendentially increasing formalism, but from its continual and restless rejection of all outmoded aesthetic forms and its constant search for new artistic means through which the critical, oppositional expression of the 'unresolved antagonisms of reality' might continue to be possible. In the process, it is true, he too deprives the concept of the directly political meaning attributed to it by Burger, who uses it to refer to a movement the sole rationale of which is to attack the social relations of the art institution from within. Yet he does so in order to preserve the meaning of that assault within the critical sociality of the modernist work itself, in the context of the defeat of the historical avant-garde's project, and its reappropriation by the art institution as itself an 'aesthetic' act. It is in the continuation of this project, I would suggest, that the real aesthetic meaning of those so-called 'postmodernist' works which have achieved an immanent aesthetic autonomy is to be found.<sup>53</sup>



Aesthetic modernism is premised upon the failure of the historical avant-garde, and the consequent transformation of the idea of the avant-garde into a specifically aesthetic category. The idea of postmodernism is premised upon the failure of aesthetic modernism. But has modernism, in any theoretically sustainable sense of the term, really failed? (What, indeed, would it mean to suggest that it has?) Or is it not the case, more simply, that the inadequacies of a specific, restricted, traditionalistic conception of modernism have finally been revealed? To the extent to which current proponents of the idea of postmodernism in the visual arts have constructed their conception in straightforward opposition to Greenbergian modernism, they have not only surrendered the history of modernism to the very theory they wish to oppose but, as a result, they/have allowed the inadequacies of that theory to infiltrate their conceptualization of the aesthetic meaning of the most recent art as well.

There is a well-known methodological adage, deriving from Marx, to the effect that the possibility of insight into the meaning and validity of certain general or abstract categories is conditional upon the state of the actual historical development of the fields to which these categories pertain.<sup>54</sup> 'This is a time', Jameson has recently suggested, 'in which, at least in part owing to what is called postmodernism, there seems to be renewed interest in finding out what modernism really was . . . and in rethinking that now historical phenomenon in new ways.'<sup>55</sup> This is also, perhaps, a time which is particularly propitious for such a rethinking. It would be a pity to pre-empt the results of such inquiry by the presumption that modernism is already definitively over.

#### NOTES

An earlier version of this paper was presented to the XIth International Congress in Aesthetics, on 'Tradition and Innovation in Aesthetics', at the University of Nottingham, August/September 1988. I would like to thank those present on that occasion, along with Andrew Benjamin and John Kraniauskas, for their comments on the draft.

- 1 Peter Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974; 2nd edition, 1980), trans. Michael Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), xlviii.
- 2 Victor Burgin, 'The end of art theory', in *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and postmodernity* (London: Macmillan, 1986), (140-204) 204; Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 94; Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), trans. C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 1-6, 355-69.
- 3 Perhaps the most extreme reaction to this growing anxiety over the lack of an adequate aesthetic definition of current artistic trends is to be found in Peter Fuller's increasing rampant traditionalism. See, for example, 'In defense of art' (1979) in Peter Fuller, *Beyond the Crisis in Art* (London: Writers & Readers, 1980), 230-64; 'Aesthetics after modernism' (1982) in Peter Fuller, *The Australian Scapegoat: Towards an Antipodean aesthetic* (Nedlands, Western Australia: University of Western Australia Press, 1986); Peter Fuller, *Images of God: The consolation of lost illusions* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1985); Peter Fuller, 'The avant-garde, again', *Art and Design*, 3, 7/8 (August 1987), 21-7; and most recently, the new magazine of which he is the editor, *Modern Painters*. Anxiety about the lack of an adequate aesthetic definition of current artistic trends is not, however, restricted to those who oppose the more formally radical of them. It is as much at work in the

debate over the concept of postmodernism as it is in that (thankfully so far less voluminous) literature which would simply dismiss both such debate, and the works to which it refers, out of hand.

- 4 Harold Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New* (New York: Horizon, 1959), 81. cf. Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The experience of modernity* (London: Verso, 1983).
- 5 Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1962), trans. Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), 107. cf. Irving Howe, *Decline of the New* (New York: 1970).
- 6 Burgin, *The End of Art Theory*, 204.
- 7 Linda Hutcheon, 'The politics of postmodernism: parody and history', *Cultural Critique*, 5 (Winter 1986-7), 179-207.
- 8 Charles Jencks, *What is Postmodernism?* (London: St Martin's Press, 1986), 7; emphasis added.
- 9 *ibid.*, 15.
- 10 'The main motive for Post-Modern architecture', Jencks writes, 'is obviously the social failure of Modern architecture' (*ibid.*; emphasis added), cf. in this regard: Suzi Gablik, *Has Modernism Failed?* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1984), where the issue of the failure of aesthetic modernism is situated within the framework of Alistair MacIntyre's philosophical broadside against the whole Enlightenment tradition; and Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, mass culture and postmodernism* (London: Macmillan, 1988), where the increased blurring of the boundaries between high art and mass culture is taken to be the essential movement underlying the shift from modernism to postmodernism. This latter theme, it should be noted, is to be found in one form or another in the work of more or less all those critics and theorists who have been concerned to map the wider cultural co-ordinates of the emergence of postmodernism from the mid-1960s onwards.
- 11 Jencks, *What is Postmodernism?*, 14-23.
- 12 Jencks is similarly inconsistent in his treatment of the idea of a postmodern style. On the one hand, he frequently uses the idea (see, for example, *ibid.*, 15, 19). On the other hand, he insists that 'there is no one Post-Modern style' (23).
- 13 See, for example: Burgin, *The End of Art Theory*; Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986); Mary Kelly, 'Re-viewing modernist criticism', *Screen*, 22, 3 (1981), 41-62; Lucy Lippard (ed.), *Six Years: The dematerialisation of the art object from 1966-1972 . . .* (New York: 1973); and Roberta Smith, 'Conceptual art', in Nikos Stangos (ed.), *Concepts of Modern Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1981), 256-72.
- 14 Burgin, 'The absence of presence: conceptualism and postmodernisms', *The End of Art Theory* (29-50), 29.
- 15 *ibid.*, 39-44.
- 16 *ibid.*, 39.
- 17 See, in particular, Clement Greenberg, 'Towards a newer Laocoon', *Partisan Review*, VII, 4 (July/August 1940), reprinted in Francis Francina (ed.), *Pollock and After: The critical debate* (London: Harper & Row, 1985), 35-46; and 'Modernist Painting', *Art and Literature*, 4 (Spring 1965), reprinted in Francis Francina and Charles Harrison (eds), *Modern Art and Modernism: A critical anthology* (London: Harper & Row, 1982), 5-10.
- 18 Peter Fuller, 'American painting since the last war', in *Beyond the Crisis in Art*, 70-97.
- 19 For an account of this co-option, and of the central role of both abstract expressionism and Greenberg's aesthetics within it, see: Max Kozloff, 'American

- painting during the cold war' (1973); Eva Cockcroft, 'Abstract expressionism, weapon of the cold war' (1974); David and Cecile Schapiro, 'Abstract expressionism: the politics of apolitical painting' (1977); and Serge Guilbaut, 'The new adventures of the avant-garde in America' (1980) - all of which are reprinted in Part II of Frascina (ed.) *Pollock and After*; and, for a more extended account, Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art* (New York: 1981).
- 20 Peter Burger, 'The decline of the modern age', *Telos*, 62 (Winter 1984/5), (117-30), 126. cf. Burgin's remark that the trivialization of the idea of the postmodern constitutes 'the greatest act of appropriation' yet by the art institution of oppositional tendencies: 'the reduction of a complex intuition of the "end of an era", with all the possibilities that should offer for "thinking the unthinkable", to an art market gimmick' (*The End of Art Theory*, 163).
- 21 Stangos (ed.), *Concepts of Modern Art*, Preface, 9. The extreme of this tendency is to be found in certain of the works of the group 'Art and Language', and in their journal *Art-Language*, where the semiotic reduction of aesthetic experience to signifying practice is followed through to its logical conclusion through the presentation of theory as itself artistic practice. Other artists-critics, however, have preferred to maintain the critical tension created by the introduction of theoretical material into more conventional visual media. See, for example, Mary Kelly's *Post Partum Document* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983) and Victor Burgin's *Between* (Oxford: Blackwell/ICA, 1986). The transformation of these two artists' work, originally displayed in the gallery, into book form reflects the increasing tendency for the documentation of conceptual works itself to take on the status of the art object within the art institution. For some reflections on the potentialities of semiotics as an interpretive framework for the visual arts, see Hubert Damisch, 'Eight theses for (or against?) a semiology of painting', *Enclitic*, III, 1 (Spring 1979).
- 22 Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock (eds), *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970-1985* (London: Pandora Press, 1987); and, for the American scene, Lucy Lippard, *From the Centre: Feminist essays on women's art* (New York: Dutton, 1976). Lippard argues that 'Feminism's greatest contribution to the future vitality of art has probably been precisely its lack of contribution to Modernism' ('Sweeping exchanges: the contribution of feminism to the art of the seventies', *Art Journal*, 41, 1/2 (1980), 362 - quoted by Griselda Pollock, 'Feminism and modernism', in Parker and Pollock, op. cit., 102). Pollock herself, however, following Mary Kelly ('Modernist criticism re-viewed') disputes this, preferring a wider, institutional definition of modernism to the narrow, Greenbergian one Lippard deploys. This difference may be taken to reflect, to a large extent, the differing social content of the women's movements in Britain and the USA. The aesthetic productivity of this connection, on both sides of the Atlantic, during the 1970s and early 1980s has been remarkable, as the work of Mary Kelly, Barbara Kruger, Cindy Sherman, Nancy Spero, Alexis Hunter and Helen Chadwick, among others, shows.
- 23 For a description of some of these developments, see Sandy Nairne, *State of the Art: Images and ideas in the 1980s* (London: Chatto & Windus/Channel Four, 1987), the book accompanying the BBC television series of the same name, chapter two; and Griselda Pollock, 'Art, artschool, culture: individualism after the death of the artist', *Block*, 11 (Winter 1985/6), 8-18.
- 24 Kelly, 'Modernist criticism re-viewed', 43.
- 25 This is not to suggest that the theoretical framework of Adorno's work should be taken over uncritically, still less that his concrete aesthetic judgements should necessarily be endorsed; but only that *Aesthetic Theory* contains the most philosophically sophisticated and aesthetically comprehensive framework yet

developed in response to this particular set of problems. For an exposition of the systematic structure of this framework, and some preliminary remarks on its application to current debates, see Peter Osborne, 'Adorno and the metaphysics of modernism: the problem of a "postmodern" art', in Andrew Benjamin (ed.), *The Problem of Modernity: Adorno and Benjamin* (London: Routledge, 1989), 23-48. For a discussion of some of the problems associated with the socio-historical theory underlying Adorno's aesthetics, and a modified defence of its essential philosophical structure, see Peter Dews and Peter Osborne, 'The Frankfurt School and the problem of critique: a reply to McCarney', *Radical Philosophy*, 45 (Spring 1987), 2-11. I have discussed some of the problems which arise within Adorno's aesthetics as a result of the ultimately undialectical character of his interpretation of his own socio-historical theory (the dialectic of Enlightenment) in 'The promise of happiness: reflection and fulfilment in "autonomous" and "dependent" art', paper to a conference on 'Torn Halves: Avant-Garde and Popular Culture in the 1980s', University of Southampton, March 1988 (forthcoming in *News from Nowhere*, 7, issue on 'The Politics of Modernism').

The most developed sketch to date of the project for a critical appropriation of Adorno's aesthetics remains Albrecht Wellmer's 'Truth, semblance, reconciliation: Adorno's aesthetic redemption of modernity', trans. Maeve Cook, *Telos*, 62 (Winter 1984/5), 89-115. Wellmer's reading of Adorno's work is, however, premised upon the communicative expansion of his concept of rationality along the lines sketched out by Habermas's theory of communicative action. This is not a path which I find it either necessary or desirable to take, since, in my view, there is already a communicative dimension built into Adorno's conception of the art work at the level of his account of its truth content.

- 26 See, for example, Thomas Crow, 'Modernism and mass culture in the visual arts', in Frascina (ed.), *Pollock and After*, 233-66; and more recently, Francis Frascina, 'Greenberg and the politics of modernism', *Art Monthly* (November 1987), 6-11.
- 27 Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 94; Fredric Jameson, 'Reification and Utopia in mass culture', *Social Text*, 1, 1 (Winter 1979); Christian Lenhardt (the translator of the English edition of *Aesthetic Theory*), 'Reply to Hullot-Kentor', *Telos*, 65 (Fall 1985); Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*.
- 28 Max Horkheimer, 'Traditional and critical theory' (1937), in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, trans. Matthew O'Connell et al. (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), 188-252.
- 29 *ibid.*, 199.
- 30 Clement Greenberg, 'Avant-garde and kitsch' (1939), in Frascina (ed.), *Pollock and After*, (21-33) 21.
- 31 The idea of the commodification of the art object stands at the centre of all of Adorno's writings on aesthetics from 'On the social situation of music' (1932) (trans. in *Telos*, 35, 128-64) to the posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory* (1970) - a body of work which fills well over half of the twenty-two volumes of his *Collected Works* {*Gesammelte Werke*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976 ff) published so far.
- 32 Howard Caygill, 'Aesthetics and civil society: theories of art and society 1640-1790', unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Sussex, 1982.
- 33 Peter Uwe Hohendahl, *The Institution of Criticism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982); Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism: From the spectator to post-structuralism* (London: Verso, 1984). These two books are primarily concerned with the institutionalization of literary criticism. Certain of the more general aspects of their argument, however, apply equally well to the visual arts. For a discussion of the problems raised for the debate over the autonomy of the art work by the current

- lack of adequate historical research into its origins, see Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 35-41.
- 34 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 117.
  - 35 *ibid.*, 320-3; 358/9.
  - 36 *ibid.*, 8.
  - 37 *ibid.*, 320-6. cf. Terry Eagleton, 'Capitalism, modernism and postmodernism', *New Left Review*, 152 (July/August 1985), 67; and my own 'Adorno and the metaphysics of modernism', 26, 35-9.
  - 38 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 330.
  - 39 All reception, Adorno argues, tends to dull the critical edge of art, and to neutralize it, since, among other things, the social conditions of its reception change over time. Neutralization is, in this respect, 'the social price art pays for its autonomy' (*Aesthetic Theory*, 325). It is for this reason, of course, amongst others, that the artist must continue to produce new works; not merely in the sense of *more* works, but works which continue to address the changing social conditions of their production. The dialectic of aesthetic modernism is, in this regard, simply the aesthetic mediation of the dialectic of history itself.
  - 40 Greenberg, 'Avant-garde and kitsch', 27; 'Towards a newer Laocoon', 40-5.
  - 41 Greenberg, 'Avant-garde and kitsch', 24.
  - 42 For an exposition of Adorno's view of the ontological structure of artistic production as a dialectic of mimesis and rationality, see my 'Adorno and the metaphysics of modernism', 29-35.
  - 43 Greenberg, 'Modernist painting', 6-7.
  - 44 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 31; 45. For an account of Adorno's theory of reification, see Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science: an introduction to the thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (London: Macmillan, 1978), chapter 3.
  - 45 Greenberg, 'Towards a newer Laocoon', 43, 44, 42.
  - 46 Greenberg, 'Modernist painting', 8.
  - 47 *ibid.*, 9, 10.
  - 48 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 29.
  - 49 *ibid.*, 468.
  - 50 *ibid.*, 213-14.
  - 51 Burger, *Theory of the Avant-garde*, 22.
  - 52 Greenberg, 'Avant-garde and kitsch', 22-3.
  - 53 It is inevitable in this regard that the various competing 'postmodernisms' should have acquired, despite themselves, the character of competing avant-gardes. John Tagg's complaint against this tendency ('Postmodernism and the born-again avant-garde', *Block*, 11 (Winter 1984/5), 3-7), is in consequence a futile one.
  - 54 Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 15-20. The point derives from Marx's discussion of the concept of labour in the *Grundrisse*.
  - 55 Fredric Jameson, 'Modernism and imperialism', *Field Day Pamphlet*, No. 14 (Derry: Field Day Theatre Co., 1988), 5.